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SOCIAL JUSTICE THE WAY TO PEACE

IN HIS essay on *Perpetual Peace*, Kant observes that a peace which is made with the reservation of embarking on a future war is no peace. It is at most an armed truce. Such is the state of Europe to-day. The United States is treading the same path of rearmament, while in the Far East war rages naked and unashamed.

More is being spent upon arms, distrust and suspicion are more rife, the aims and purposes of life are far more stunted and perverted by fear and distrust than they were twenty-five years ago. There is little to be placed upon the credit side of the account except a more lively appreciation of the dangers ahead.

The League of Nations, too much imbued at its beginning with the idea of compulsion rather than co-operation, has become sadly weakened by defection and inertia, and the doctrine of the balance of power appears to be supplanting it.

If there is any lesson to be learned from all this bitter experience it is that war is not finally to be eliminated from the earth by means of leagues or alliances which depend upon the use of force, but by searching for the causes which induce men to resort to force and by destroying those causes.

If the origins of the first wars be sought in the dim mists of history, it appears that they were the incursions of robber bands who set themselves to acquire the means of life by force instead of by work and who subjugated peaceful peoples, making them slaves or serfs. The same motive continues as the outline of history becomes clearer, but with a difference. The conquerors themselves become differentiated into classes. Their chiefs are rich and powerful, but the rank and file are little better off than their victims. So in the history of Rome even in the days of the Republic Tiberius, Gracchus could say: "The wild beasts of Italy have their caves to retire to, but the brave men who spill their blood in her cause have nothing left but air and light." The ancient, and even the mediæval army, could at least despoil the vanquished of some paltry possessions. It may still be true that a small minority of a nation finds in war the means of living without working, by selling munitions or obtaining cheaply concessions or monopolies in conquered territory. But the modern army dies day by day in the trenches and its remnants come back to poverty and unemployment.

Yet is it not true that war continues because of the "great illusion" that somehow it is a means to a better living? It is here that the real task of prevention of

war begins, in leading men to understand that there are in every country abundant means of life if they will but have them used adequately and shared equally. This is true of Germany, Poland, or Hungary, and equally true of Great Britain or France. In every one of them there are great estates and land badly used. In every one of them there is misery and unemployment. In every one of them the meagre earnings of the people are diminished by a multitude of taxes raising prices and obstructing employment, while the natural revenue of the State, the value which attaches to land by the combined activities of the people, is appropriated by privileged individuals.

Here is where the task of preventing war and establishing permanent peace begins, and it is for every country to remove the beam from its own eye before it seeks the mote in its neighbour's.

We have not learned the lesson of history if we do not understand that the break up of States comes from within and not from without. It is the great estates, said Pliny, that have ruined Italy, and that will soon ruin the provinces also. When men are deprived of the fruits of their labour, and even of the opportunity to labour, the most sacred rights of mankind are violated, and it is in vain to pretend that such evils will not have evil results.

Nor have we learned the lesson of experience if we do not see that the whole progress of commerce, science, and invention lies in the direction of breaking down national boundaries, and extending the field of economic effort over the whole world. The division of labour has ceased to be a local affair. The web of trade is woven out of threads which unite every land. The citizens of each country can best help both themselves and their neighbours by producing those things which by nature or inclination they are best fitted to produce and exchanging freely the products of their labours for the products of others irrespective of race, creed or nationality. As the Stoic philosopher has said: "We are made for co-operation—like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the rows of the upper and lower teeth." We fly in the face of nature when we attempt to obstruct that co-operation by opposing to it artificial and unnatural barriers.

A just society can only be founded upon individual freedom. Without that the integrity of human personality is destroyed. And individual freedom involves not only political freedom, but economic freedom to produce and to dispose of the product of one's labour as one will. It is on this basis and on this alone that war, and the fear of war, can be banished from the world.

F. C. R. D.

It is curious that the increasing speed of communications should result in unprecedented congestion of the population in a few centres. Who decrees this "sliding of the greatest city in the world down an architectural inclined plane and towards the bottomless pit of the minimum life?" Why is it that "as rents go higher, ceilings come lower?" The rise in land values is held accountable, and it is largely true that a monopoly in the remaking of London has been virtually secured by speculators.—*Country Life*, 3rd September.